

# **EASTPORT**

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## **PORT AUTHORITY**

Tel: 207-853-4614 Fax: 207-853-9584

Website: [www.portofeastport.org](http://www.portofeastport.org)

P.O. Box 278, Eastport, ME 04631-0278

March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

Please accept this letter of strong support for the Maine Department of Transportation's (MaineDOT) grant application for the U.S. Department Rural Surface Transportation Grant program (Rural). The application outlines MaineDOT's important plans to rehabilitate 63 miles of coastal US Route 1 in Washington County, Maine, and a segment of State Route 190 from Eastport to the Pleasant Point Reservation via the Downeast Coastal US Route 1 Improvement Project. This highway is the primary coastal route serving Downeast Maine and is critical to the coastal communities that rely on it to connect them to larger service centers where people work, shop, and obtain medical care.

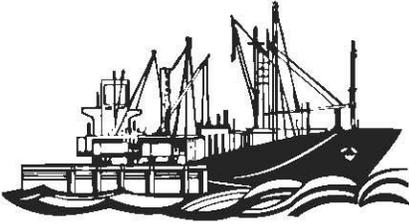
It is also a vital freight corridor that serves the natural resource-based economy, including the Woodland Pulp and St. Croix Tissue mill in Baileyville, the largest employer in Washington County, and the Port of Eastport, the deepest natural seaport in the continental United States.

Furthermore, this corridor includes sections of the Bold Coast Scenic Byway, critical to Downeast Maine's tourism economy.

In addition to rehabilitation work, the project will include:

- Roadside safety improvements to help address rural roadway departure crashes and fatalities, which in Maine are above the national average
- Widening shoulders to better accommodate cyclists and pedestrians
- Replacing drainage structures to better withstand the effects of climate change and promote fish passage

This project provides numerous benefits to Washington County, which has the second highest poverty rate in the state with about 18 percent living below the poverty line and includes areas of persistent poverty. The county is Maine's most culturally diverse being home to two tribal communities, including the Sipayik Passamaquoddy Nation (Pleasant Point Reservation), which is one of the fastest growing communities along US Route 1.



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The County is also experiencing ongoing effects of the opioid epidemic, which has seen Washington County have 25% of the entire state's homicides while having only 2% of its population. This project will directly benefit underserved communities and areas of persistent poverty by improving the mobility and safety of this important corridor, including improving accessibility to bicyclists and pedestrians. Many public leaders understand that transportation infrastructure investments are the very foundation that any economic development requires in order to truly build any measurable of success upon.

We are pleased that MaineDOT is seeking assistance from USDOT for this very important project. This grant will build a stronger Route 1 corridor that supports the local people and natural resource-based economy, in which the Port of Eastport plays a key role via this corridor. Furthermore it prepares the entire region for many of the challenges we face in the future. We respectfully request that you please consider fully funding this project for an MPDG Grant award. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Christopher M. Gardner". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a light blue rectangular background.

Christopher M. Gardner  
Executive Director  
Eastport Port Authority

Cc: Maine Department of Transportation